

HAMKARI: Engineers at work in Kandahar

Capitaine Jean-Olivier Berger
JTF-Afg / TFK Engineer Regt

The 3rd Specialist Engineering Team (made up of members of the 1st Engineering Support Unit in Moncton, N.B.) was responsible during Rotation 9 for Canada's share of the construction work to be done under Operation HAMKARI, an initiative of the government of Afghanistan designed to meet Kandahar's security needs, strengthen governance in key areas, and develop economic opportunities.



Dand District, Afghanistan; 29 July 2010 — Members of the KPRT's Specialist Engineer Team inspect the defences of the Afghan National Police Sub-Station on Three-Tank Hill, a rocky outcrop that provides an excellent view of the surrounding countryside and a final resting place for the wreckage of three armoured fighting vehicles.

— credit/source: Cpl Keith Wazny, QG FOI-Afg

Part of an overall effort to bolster residents' confidence in the Afghan government, HAMKARI, which means “cooperation” in Pashto, has other objectives as well: to convince citizens of their government's effectiveness while discouraging them from supporting the insurgency. To this end, a series of construction projects linked to security were identified in partnership with local communities. Thus, engineers play a very important role in HAMKARI and, from the beginning, many coalition engineering units have taken active part in the initiative.



Dand District, Afghanistan; 29 July 2010 — KPRT engineers discuss the defensive capabilities of the Afghan National Police sub-station on Three-Tank Hill with a member of the detachment posted there.

— credit/source: Cpl Keith Wazny, QG FOI-Afg

The first phase of HAMKARI is to establish a security perimeter to control the primary routes into and out of Kandahar City. The American engineers are responsible for refurbishing the existing tactical infrastructure and the construction of new access control points on the city's main streets, thus providing both force protection and workspace for the rank-and-file members of the Afghan National Police (ANP). Because safety in the city depends on security in the surrounding districts, Canadian efforts are concentrated on Dand and Panjwa'i, where many access control points for the ANP have been built or renovated.

Some 70 construction projects currently under way have already improved — and will continue to improve — safety for the residents of the Kandahar City area. Our involvement in Kandahar Province began five years ago, and our projects have touched on every aspect of civil engineering. To name only a few, we have built or rebuilt many roads, bridges, schools, police stations and artesian wells, as well as Sarposa Prison and its supporting infrastructure. By refurbishing the defences of all the police stations in the city, we also contribute to the safety of the Afghan government's elected representatives and civil servants, thus helping them connect with the people, respond to their needs and bring them essential services.



Dand District, Afghanistan; 31 July 2010 — A soldier from the Specialist Engineering Team watches Afghan labourers haul fresh concrete for the foundation of a building that will include 24 classrooms for women.

— credit/source: Cpl Keith Wazny, QG FOI-Afg

Buildings and infrastructure in the Canadian area of responsibility have been substantially improved to increase their resistance to attack. For example, the residence of the Governor of Kandahar Province and Kandahar City Hall were among the first complexes to benefit from improvements proposed by the engineers. Basically, the objective is to strengthen these buildings without making them look like fortresses, because obvious fortifications do not help the Afghan government improve its image or get closer to the people. For their first line of defence, some department heads chose typical Afghan construction.

We also helped the people build their capacity to improve their academic infrastructure. The Afghans know very well that the future of their country will be better, thanks in part to a more educated populace. In fact, considerable efforts have been put in place to ensure the construction of a network of safe schools and institutions for training the next generation of teachers. There is still plenty of work to be done to rebuild government institutions and improve public safety, and the engineers are working on it — one building at a time.